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THE GAINING OF MEN;

OR,

THE LAW OF ADAPTATION TO ENVIRONMENT IN MISSIONARY
ENTERPRISE.

ANNUAL SERMON

BEFORE THE

American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions

DELIVERED TUESDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 10, 1893

AT WORCESTER, MASS.

BY THE

REV. ALBERT J. LYMAN, D.D.

PUBLISHED BY THE BOARD
I SOMERSET STREET, BOSTON

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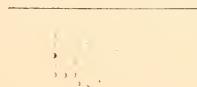
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THE GAINING OF MEN;

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ENTERPRISE.

I VENTURE to ask your attention, Christian fathers and brethren, to the singular, fivefold repetition of four words by the Apostle Paul within the compass of a single short paragraph in the ninth chapter of 1st Corinthians. It is, I believe, the most marked instance of such reiterated emphasis in all Paul's writings, certainly in those which are of unquestioned authenticity.

The words are, "That I might gain," "*That I might gain*." A sixth time, even, the refrain is repeated in the same connection, with only a slight change, "That I might by all means save." The entire passage reads as follows:

1 Cor. ix: 19-23 — 19. For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, *that I might gain* the more.

20. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, *that I might gain* the Jews; to them that are under law, as under the law, ("not being myself under the law," as the Revised Version adds) *that I might gain* them that are under the law.

21. To them that are without law, as without law (being not without law to God, but under law to Christ) *that I might gain* them that are without law.

22. To the weak became I as weak, *that I might gain* the weak: I am made all things to all men *that I might by all means save some*.

23. And this I do for the gospel's sake.

It appears that the autobiography of the Apostle Paul — for the personal allusions in his letters, while fragmentary, surely make up the most vivid autobiography in the Bible —

presents no other passage so clear in its statement of Paul's own view of his missionary errand, and especially of the relations which, in pursuit of it, he sustains toward his environment.

It embodies what has been called Saint Paul's doctrine of "accommodation" to environment—a doctrine, however, so liable to misconception that one half-hesitates to read the passage as our text tonight, lest he should seem to lower the tone of a great occasion like this by some note of undue concession or even compromise of principle; for adaptation to environment, which has come to be a great phrase in our era, has sometimes involved a kind of surrender to environment. In such a time as our own, an arena splendid and novel, full of new and peremptory challenges and demands, we easily forget the end in our attention to the means in conducting the work of great Christian enterprises. The popular cry is, "Adapt yourselves to the times;" "Adjust yourselves to your environment;" "Change your methods;" "Be all things to all men!" and the all-absorbing question becomes this one of adjustment. How to meet the intellectual movement of the time, for example, with its keen and fresh scrutiny of our foundations of faith; or the democratic movement of our time, with what Emerson calls its "pitiless publicity" and its insistence upon popular representation as the basis of administrative or corporate action; or the business movement of our time, with its practical air, its swift changes, and its impatience of traditional technique. But this inevitable anxiety about method often dulls our attention to the spiritual end which is sought. In the field of missionary enterprise the supreme and constant errand—that of the spiritual rescue of men and nations—easily fades from sight in our enforced and eager attention to the combinations of agency by which, in a tremendous and bewildering age, missionary enterprise is to be advanced. But worse than this, the argument for change in method, in response to changed environment, is pressed too far and carried to a most fallacious extreme. The curve

of false reasoning runs like this: We must suit ourselves to the age, it is said; we must give the people what they will understand — *and accept*. So enters the deflecting fallacy under cover of the innocent looking conjunction, and the false argument runs on to say — we must preach a nineteenth-century gospel and meet the times with what the times demand.

Thus, before we know it, the spirit of concession as to method has invaded the texture of the message itself. The heroic strain of fidelity to the truth is relaxed. The old martial gleam fades in the eye of the missionary. Christian daring is succeeded by Christian diplomacy, and the missionary spirit permits itself to be half conquered by the world in order to gain access to the world.

This sidelong sag toward surrender of vital principle makes true men question any doctrine of so-called “accommodation” to the times. But, on the other hand, here in the text is a maxim of the great model missionary, stated with all the force of his eloquence and personal testimony, involving a principle of response to environment which, evidently, he regarded as vital to his success.

What then is this principle of Christian “accommodation,” or, as we had better say, of *adaptation* to environment in the work of missions? What are the limitations of its application? What philosophy of the Christian life lies back of it, and how does it apply to the new forces which are remodeling the present epoch? These, honored brethren, are questions which have seemed to me vital enough and peremptory enough to be not wholly inopportune for our consideration tonight.

For the imperfect preparation I have been able to make for their presentation I must crave at your hands a special indulgence. The most shattering blow that can fall on a man fell upon me just as the summer was opening. Death struck upon the dear wife who for twenty-three years had walked by my side. I have no child, and the lonely fight this past summer among the Scottish Highlands to regain

enough of steadiness to meet this duty, to which your more than kind invitation had summoned me, has left scant leisure for that careful study and finished statement which such a theme demands and which a presence such as this preëminently calls for. But what I have, I give. Our subject, then, is this:

THE CHRISTIAN LAW OF ADAPTATION TO ENVIRONMENT IN
ITS RELATION TO MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE AT THE PRESENT TIME.

Of course this theme is too large for a single sermon, but let us try, if possible, to discover the single, central principle of St. Paul's teaching upon the subject in the passage before us.

First. We need not delay upon any restatement of the general truth — now the axiom of physics, and accepted also in the critical study of intellectual and moral forces by most modern students — that the progress of life depends, or at least very largely depends, upon this adaptation to environment.

Second. Nor need we linger long upon the further very remarkable fact that Christianity, far more thoroughly than any other of the great religions, approves this law.

Adaptability to environment, without loss of essential quality, is a principle which lies at the marrow of the philosophy of the gospel, and is clearly illustrated in the New Testament. It appears, for example, in the profoundest parables of Jesus concerning the kingdom of God, such as those of the "leaven" and of the "mustard-seed." It appears in such later revelations as Saint Peter's vision at Joppa and address to Cornelius. It appears in the immense yet facile change of policy toward the Gentiles accomplished at the first Church Council at Jerusalem. It shines along the whole career of Paul, and has reappeared at every vital epoch in the Church's history — a certain divine breadth and ease of adjustment to external conditions, wholly unknown in other

religions, which yet impairs not one whit the persistence of essential idea and spirit.

Third. Let me, however, call your more careful attention to a third point, viz., that this unique, double mark of persistence in radical ideal, combined with flexibility of method, has always been supremely manifest in *missionary* enterprise. The noblest Christian missions always exhibit this supreme fidelity and facility side by side.

Ulfas, in his boat on the Danube, carrying the gospel to the Goths in the fourth century; Bishop Claudio, of Turin, "the Protestant of the ninth century," as he has been called, planting the cross amid the snows in the upper valleys of Piedmont; Eliot, two hundred and fifty years ago, in the Massachusetts forests with his Indians; Mackay, of Uganda, in our own time, gentle, brilliant, and brave, cutting his own printing types in the African forest and tolerated by the savage Mwanga only because he was such a master at the forge—all are embodiments of the finished and beautiful power of this double Christian principle, that of variety of method with identity of spirit. And there is reason in this; for the missionary, more than any other minister, stands out on the critical and perilous edge where the gospel meets the heathen world. He, therefore, more than any other man, must employ the Christian art of conciliation without compromise. His task is urgent; his time short; his errand is to save; and with a swift and nimble skill, the secret of which is in the very heart of the Christian genius, he matches his method to the man, yet without sinking a consonant or blurring a vowel in the divine message he is sent to deliver.

Fourth. But missions also supremely illustrate a still further principle which is, I believe, the real heart of the matter—that this wonderful facility of outward adaptation is the *product* as well as the correlative of the inner spiritual earnestness.

Here we come upon the main track of our theme; and the main truth which, if I mistake not, is taught by our text, and which I would venture to emphasize tonight, that

a reinforcement of the *essential missionary spirit*, its vital enthusiasm, its humane ardor, its Christlike passion to save, is the one and the true and the only way in which to *secure* that broad facility in readjustment, that fine adaptation to the new conditions, which is now in demand.

For this breadth and quickness of adaptation to the times, whether it relates to organization or to policy, is a *vital* thing. It must spring from an inner source ; it is no matter of outward manipulation ; it is the outward glow of an inner fire ; it is something too fine to be reached, save as the spontaneous resultant of some holy and beautiful passion of the soul.

It is precisely at this point that we come upon the tremendous sixfold refrain in this passage from the apostle Paul. The passage is often brought forward as the standard justification of variety in mere method ; but, if so, it is read *without the refrain*. No more magnificent assertion of the supremacy of end over method was ever uttered. All methods are adopted, according to Saint Paul, "*that he might gain*," "*that he might gain*," and only "*that he might gain*" men. What he means by "*gain*" men is, as he himself adds, that he might "*save*" men. And what he means by "*save*" is, as is evident in all the Pauline writings, the saving men in Christ—the setting up of the image of Christ within them. That is the heart of the Pauline idea ; it is the glorious beauty of a spiritual restoration by the introduction of the very power and similitude of the living Christ within men. The burning sense of this thrilling and holy *end* lies back of any Pauline "*adjustment*" in the use of means. And, brethren, is not a fresh sense of this supreme *end* of missions what we most of all need today, and in it, do we not come to a clear knife-edge beyond which concession to environment or to the spirit of the age must not go, but within which adaptation to environment becomes a spontaneous product of this aroused earnestness to save ? It is as though the apostle felt that in admitting such a flexibility in the use of means, he was avowing a principle which would be dangerous in feeble or faithless hands ; so, in this refrain he rivets

down, as by repeated hammer-strokes, the sharp rim beyond which the flexible is to become the inflexible. It is as though we were reading a code of military instructions, but reading them in the intervals of a cannon-shot, whose recurrent thunder gives us the sense of the real import of all instructions and of the mass and menace of the foe ; or, to take a closer analogy, it is as if the captain of a life-boat were announcing hurried orders to his crew how to turn here and there and handle the boat in the foam ; but all spoken *in the boat itself*, and interpreted by the flash of yonder revolving light on the shore, whose gleam shows breaking wreck and drowning men and all the mournful and terrific urgency of the hour.

Method, according to Saint Paul, waits on errand, and it needs no argument to show how this errand to "gain" men and nations in Christ fascinates and fires the great apostle. This it is which gives him that *ingenium perfervidum*, that white-hot passion of service, which *drove* his whole life. All the heavens blazed to him at the thought of gaining a man to Christ. Human literature contains no picture which quite matches this enthusiasm of Paul for his Lord and for saving men in his Lord's name.

It will not do, therefore, to read this passage in a quiet monotone, as though it were a studied schedule of Christian diplomacy, with a little evangelical cadence occurring at intervals. The cadence is the theme. It is the cadence that is controlling. Read it again in this view of it : Among Jews I am Jewish ; then comes the cannon-shot "that I might gain Jews." To legalists, I am as a legalist ; "that I might gain them that are under the law." To freemen, a freeman, "that I might gain" freemen. To the weak, weak, "that I might gain" the weak. A servant to all, "that I might gain" the more. To every one a comrade, for that is what that phrase "all things to all men" really means, "*that I might by all means save*," and only as shall help me to gain and save.

The object limits the method ; the continued identity of

the end limits the play of variety in the use of means. The great iron bridge over the Firth of Forth near Edinburgh, the mightiest bridge in the world, is allowed to slide seven feet on itself to allow for contraction and expansion. If it were rigid it would crush itself under the summer sun or pull itself asunder in the winter frost. As free as the swing of the tree-bough is the seven-foot slide upon itself of that enormous mass of iron ; but it must be all along one line and groove, not by the fraction of an inch outside of that. So of the free slide of Christian adaptation to environment. The majestic and intense idea of gaining the soul determines the limits of variation in the way of approaching the soul. But we go further. The exact point is here. These fine adaptations of method are the *spontaneous products* of devotion to such an end as this ; for the end is not to gain converts but to gain *men*, to recreate the true glory of the soul by bringing Christ into men and informing them with his lovely and lofty image.

Now, an end like this is so enkindling and exalted, so on the very ridge of human aspiration and power, that even to conceive it gives breadth and play to a man's faculty, and wholly to seek it reacts into the utmost spring and readiness of resource, like a climb in the hills. Realizing such an errand, the missionary approaches men with the supreme ease of a fearless friendliness, and a missionary society arranges its policy with a gentle largeness in which is the very genius of real adaptation, and yet without a hint of surrender of principle.

Missionary measures and policies, then, are not compromises, inventions, devices, studies in attitude, so much as they are the natural attitudes of the real wrestler, the real rescuer. This impulse to save is *the* thing in Christianity — the heart of its heart, like the “inmost purple spirit of light,” to use Shelley's phrase — and this when felt creates adaptation as the target attracts the shot. Only kindle that saving passion in a man, admit intellect to it, and he cannot help adapting himself to the circumstances of the case. The

thing to pray for is not the adaptation but the fire. Facility waits on fervor. (Perhaps a lack of this fire is the reason why some of our laborious modern "adaptations" are so ineffective.)

And the Christian philosophy which underlies all this is that simple yet noble philosophy to which now the minds of Christian people in many lands are turning. Christianity is a life, a personal and divine life, reproduced in a human life; an incarnation — first, of God in Christ, and then of Christ in believing man.

Now this life of God, reproduced through Christ in man, is reproduced in *man*, *i.e.*, it stands related to what is generic and universal in human nature and in man; and our methods become at once easily varied and free when we seek the generic and universal. The life of God in the soul of man is beneath subsidiary forms of statement on the side of the message and of manners on the side of the man. What is merely relative, provisional, fugitive, in either direction, in the dialect of the message or the manners of the man, the missionary knows himself free to deal with as circumstances require, else we could not even translate the Scriptures. But the heart of the message must reach the heart of the man. These remain the same. The missionary stands, then, for the identity and brotherhood of man everywhere and for the identity of the gospel everywhere. Here is the philosophical ground for the magnificent and unique combination of facility and fidelity which we observe in the best missionary service — a feature which is always lost in the mere propaganda. Loyalty to the Christian faith is never sacrificed. It was this very Paul who said he made himself "all things to all men" who also said "God hath made of one blood all nations of men," and who also said, "Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other doctrine, let him be anathema." Paul's doctrine of adaptation must be interpreted by Paul's own practice; and as to that practice, there was more of constancy in it than of change. Never for a moment did that swift and martial life lose its battle-rush, under any cau-

tion or concession of diplomacy. Always outspoken, firm, and valiant, he suppressed nothing of the main truth of his message to avoid danger or conflict. The real message must reach the real man, and no "adaptation" is admissible which for a moment dulls or delays this vivid and vital contact.

Such, in rough statement, I understand to be Saint Paul's principle of adaptation — what we may call the Christian law of adaptation in connection with missions. It is an adaptation which is both subordinate to a spiritual end and is itself the spontaneous product of aroused fidelity to that end.

Now, before seeking, in the closing paragraphs, to apply this principle to the question of the great and novel forces which are reshaping the conditions of missionary work in our day, I venture to burden your patience for a moment by way of showing how brilliantly the *history of missions* confirms the view here presented — that the broadest variety and facility in method spring from the intense evangelical earnestness of the underlying motive. When the true spiritual end of gaining men for Christ has been lost sight of in the zeal of the propagandist or the partisan, then methods have become cumbrous and artificial. But the true missions, from the time of Saint Paul to the present, *have* been full of a certain supremacy of essentials, a cheerful ardor, a vivid and happy sense of Christ and his good news for men, a central glow so gracious and humane that awkwardness and stiffness of address and policy became impossible.

You know how it was at the very beginning. Other hands caught Saint Paul's falling torch and carried it far and wide, for the true "apostolic succession" was the *missionary* succession. The nimble and winged Greek tongue received the most precious treasure ever committed to a language — the story of the cross.

Scattered by winds of persecution, which, as we are accustomed to say, both winnowed the wheat and sowed it through the earth, Christians went everywhere, and the name "Christian" became synonymous with "missionary."

Then ensued that wonderful dissemination of the gospel, never paralleled in the history of religions. We see that missionary torch, Paul's old torch, flying along the great Roman roads, in the wake of armies, on the margin of caravans ; soldiers and sailors pass it from hand to hand. Across the African desert, up the windings of the Nile, out along the Red Sea to Yemen and India, across Mesopotamia to Persia, north into the vast forests of Dacia, over the snowy redoubt of the Alps into Gaul, and beyond Gaul, even, to where the misty islands of Britain fronted the prophetic pulsing of the western sea — everywhere in those early centuries went the missionary messenger of the cross, and everywhere in his track we find a certain bright charm of manner and address which is the spontaneous product of his living sense of his wonderful message.

Irenæus, writing from the upper Rhone in the second century, says : "Though the languages of the world are dissimilar, yet the import of the tradition in them all is one and the same." "The haunts of the Britons," writes Tertullian in the third century, "inaccessible to the Roman arms, are accessible to Christ." The spirit of Pentecost, vital yet varied, like mingled wind and fire, inspired believers and ran throughout the world, catching every man's vernacular, swiftly meeting every local condition, everywhere apparently provincial because everywhere so deeply cosmopolitan, mobile and facile because human and divine, until by the opening of the fourth century ten millions of Christians were numbered in the Roman Empire in place of the barely half million at the close of the first century.

In each of the three following centuries, the fourth, fifth, and sixth, one missionary achievement of the first class carries on the same deep lesson — that *felicity in the handling of missions is the fruit of spiritual earnestness*. These three superb achievements were the mission of Ulfila to the Goths, in the fourth century ; that of Patrick to Ireland in the fifth century ; that of Columba to Scotland, in the sixth century.

There is no time to speak of them in detail. As varied

as the peoples addressed, free and natural yet amazingly effective in method, were these missions, in which the facile adaptation plainly grew out of the spirit of Christlike love for man which possessed these three great missionaries. This appears in the letters of Patrick, the missionary to Ireland. He was a heroic and fascinating personality. Born in Brittany, he was in his youth captured by pirates and carried to Ireland and used as a slave, finally escaping, then returning voluntarily under the irresistible desire to preach Christ among the rude barbarians whom he had known as a bondman.

"My friends tried to prevent me," he writes, "saying, 'Why does this man rush into danger among the heathen?' . . . But God conquered in me and I withheld them, and I went to preach the gospel to the people of Ireland, where I am ready to give up my life with joy for Christ's name's sake." He established perhaps three hundred churches and kindled a light that illumined all Western Europe for three hundred years, giving to Ireland its title of *Insula Sanctorum*, and he accomplished this by what we should call a marvelous skill in adaptation. He entered the cabins of the common people, adopted their manner of life, met their prejudices, winning all by a certain gentleness and even gayety, hitting to a nicety the nerve of the Celtic race, and yet moved by such an ardor that he says, "In one day I offered a hundred prayers and in the night almost as many, and in the mountains I rose up to pray in the snow, ice, and rain before day-break, yet I felt no pain, for the spirit glowed within me."

Then, in the century still following, we have the intellectual mission of Columba, perhaps the most marvelous of the three. He was an Irishman of the noble blood of Ulster. In the spirit of penance for his own fiery temper he came from Ireland with twelve followers, and in 563 A.D. established a mission to the Picts on the wild and stormy west coast of Scotland. The little islet of Iona, where Columba set up his school, became the Scottish Patmos, and its beautiful cross, the "cross of Iona," became the immortal Christian

blossom on that rough coast, telling to this day the story of that wonderful mission — a mission heroic, intellectual, evangelical — training students, translating the Scriptures, sending out missionaries all over Western Europe, maintaining a free and spiritual conception of Christianity, and even holding out against the authority of the Vatican for two hundred years.

Now, the thing that shines out in connection with each of these three astonishing missions, different entirely as they are in time and type, is the very thing we are speaking of tonight — an *extraordinary breadth and freedom of adaptation of method to environment combined with equally marked purity and earnestness of evangelical spirit*. The inference is demonstrative that this spirit itself, the spiritual enthusiasm to save in Christ's name, *produced* the bold and easy play of agency and method, the winning felicities of manner, the subtle appositeness in meeting circumstances and addressing men.

Then, later on, we have in a sadder story the same truth illustrated conversely. There arose the strange menace of the crescent in the east ; the Saracen captured the Holy Sepulcher, the Moor came to Spain, and Europe passed into the din and clang of those iron centuries of the Crusades. Missionary activity did not cease, but it lost its spiritual tone, and also, in the same ratio, its felicity of method. We look in vain for the humane sympathy of Patrick or the intellectual freedom of Columba. Missions became politico-ecclesiastical. Force and diplomacy became the substitutes for the beautiful charm of natural adaptation, and accordingly missions relatively failed.

But the meridian of history changed in Europe. God shifted in a night the hinges of his doors. The great focus and pivot of affairs was transferred from the eastern rim of Europe to the western. In 1492, Boabdil, the last of the Moorish monarchs, fled from Spain, and the cross shone in the halls of the Alhambra. In that same year the finger of God's providence made of the deep a furrow, and pointed

the path before three little boats in which Columbus set forth upon the mighty voyage whose issue after four hundred years this nation celebrates in its Columbian Festival. Twenty-five years later Martin Luther nailed his theses to the church door in Wittenberg, and the tremendous sixteenth century came marching in like an army with banners. In the south, the classic Renaissance; in the north, the German Reformation; in the west, the Titanic burst of the Elizabethan era, and as the result of all a new volume opened for the world and for Christ! Christianity discovered that the world was round, and for the first time wholly took its problem up into its hands. Still, missionary activity, while often laborious and heroic, was ecclesiastical rather than evangelical in its notion of the end to be attained. Its methods accordingly were still artificial, and the results in the way of permanent spiritual conquest were largely barren. The Latin Church at this period sent out whole regiments of missionaries — many of them most devoted men — to India and Japan and to the new lands, to South America, Mexico, and the Indian tribes of the far north, when men like Brebeuf, René Ménard, and Marquette endured incredible hardship. These Roman Catholic brethren, also, are of the noble army of martyrs. Japan was claimed to be "Christianized." In India Xavier baptized alleged converts till his arms sank exhausted in the act of baptizing. But these, also, were not altogether spiritual conquests. The spirit that governed them was not always a passion to save men from sin in Christ's name. It was often a passion to multiply adherents to a church — the spirit of the propaganda. And accordingly this degeneration of end produced a degeneration of means. These agents of the propaganda "adapted" too much. Legitimate concession becomes illegitimate surrender, and these Latin missions of the sixteenth century to a large extent failed and fell, ending in Japan in frightful tragedy; in Mexico, and some of the South American States, sinking in the swamps of native vices; in India — under Robert de Nobili — conceding so much to Brahminic caste as to become "more Brahminic than Christian."

But a new spirit arose. Early in the eighteenth century the little Moravian Church at Herrnhut resolved itself into a missionary "committee of the whole." The political and ecclesiastical conception of the mission gives way before the return of the apostolic and spiritual. The true unit of missionary enterprise becomes again the saving of a man in Christ.

In 1789 William Carey landed in India, and the modern Protestant mission was born. And since that epoch this last one hundred years of Protestant missions is one long, splendid demonstration of the same Pauline maxim that facility and efficiency of adaptation to environment is the natural *fruit* of the Christian passion to save.

What magnificent expositions of this principle have been seen in the history of this American Board. The most noble and daring of them all is, perhaps, the translation of the Scriptures into the vernacular of hundreds of peoples; for what is this but the broadest and most fearless "adaptation to environment," yet without losing a single note in Paul's old cry, "That I might gain," "That I might save."

No words can do justice to the magnificent splendor of this achievement of translation and to its significant bearing upon the point before us tonight. For it might easily be said and plausibly argued that we should lose what is characteristic in Christianity in committing its delicate and spiritual message to the meager and coarse syllables of a savage tongue; that translation, even, is adaptation carried too far. For languages reproduce psychologies. The wide gulfs that separate whole races run up between their linguistic forms, and one might maintain that the very essence of a given idea is bound up in a given language and confined to that language.

The French "Dieu" is not quite the Saxon "God." It has been a question with our missionaries what Chinese word to choose out of nine possible combinations to represent the supreme name. Can the sublime Jehovah of the Hebrew writings, it might be asked, be made known in Malay, and the finished Christ of the Greek Testament be reproduced

in Choctaw? And what words has the Zulu of South Africa into which the mighty logic of the Epistle to the Romans can be hammered?

Never mind, has been the reply of this American Board, as of all the great Protestant societies. The gospel is as universal as man. So widely humane is it, so intimately vital to all men, that even the variations of a hundred dialects are subordinate after all. We *dare* to fling this gospel out to the winds of any century, out to the native handling of any people. Christianity can stand universal translation. It can be preached in every man's vernacular. It is doubtful whether the iron fatalism of the Moslem literature can be reproduced in the free energy of Saxon. It is more than doubtful whether the mystic subtlety of Buddhism can be put into the finished and brilliant precision of the French. But Christianity may be preached in Arabic or Hindi as well as in French or English. What ampler or bolder testimony is possible to the principle under discussion, that the philosophy of Christianity unites consistent adherence to the central idea with infinite adaptation of form to environment?

Surely the deep logic of the past history of the American Board tends toward a noble and yet safe liberality in meeting the fresh environment of new times.

In the same line of illustration, also, is the immense confidence with which the American Board has in these later decades more and more intrusted the gospel to native pastors, managing their own native churches. Does it not seem as though the seal of God's approval has been put upon this idea of intrusting the gospel to the native handling of the nations? It is not necessary to denationalize a people in order to Christianize them. At first the theory was different. The American Board in an early Annual Report, for the year 1816, I think, declared the object of the mission among the Indians to be "to make them *English in their language*,¹ civilized in their habits, and Christian in their religion."

¹The italics are ours.

Now, on the contrary, this Board says to the children of Japan: Remain Japanese if you will, but be Christian. You do not require to come into the kingdom of heaven *via* the English language alone, or *via* the local idiosyncrasies of Western civilization. You can be your own Oriental selves and yet be evangelical Christians. You can realize your best national ideals and yet be Christian. The missionary is no foe to local patriotism.

Finally, then, may we not bring this Pauline principle—that the finest and broadest adaptation to environment in the conduct of missions has its true source in the loving earnestness to gain men in Christ—into the great and thrilling arena of the present hour, and ask how it applies to missionary enterprise now, in the midst of our novel and exciting conditions of life, and especially in view of four special forces of our epoch, which are, perhaps as prominent and positive as any.

For the critical and urgent question which confronts us and crowds upon us, is really this: Can our missionary work adapt itself, *without loss*, to this modern environment, and, if so, how, and how far?

Beneath our special discussions is this real question of *readjustment* at various points to what we call the “spirit of our time.” What readjustments, if any, are appropriate, for example, in view of the spirit of critical inquiry as to matters of doctrine? What readjustments, if any, does the democratic and socially representative spirit of our age call for? These are specimens of questions where the light glitters on the weapon’s edge in current debate. My office is surely not to enlarge upon these special questions, but to voice your deeper and common feeling in referring them all to a still more commanding principle, the law, as we have tried to trace it, of *all* adjustment to environment in missionary enterprise; that we are first to gain a certain fresh sense of our holy and thrilling missionary *errand* before we are fitly prepared even to enter upon these questions of adjustment, and that when we are once fairly *possessed* with our errand

in Paul's way and in Christ's name, the "adjustments" will already have half accomplished themselves.

It is along the line of Saint Paul's thrilling, sixfold cry, "That I might gain," "*That I might gain*" that we shall best approach the immediate questions of the present hour.

One can scarcely go amiss in selecting these four among the chief new forces of our time :

First. The spirit of free rational inquiry and criticism.

Second. The spirit of industrial enterprise by the aid of applied science.

Third. The spirit of representative government under forms of a social democracy.

Fourth. The spirit of humanitarian relief and reform.

These rapidly closing moments will permit only the briefest glance upon these four tendencies, but we must hold that to them, also, our principle applies. They are all within the compass of legitimate missionary use and adaptation, but such a vast adaptation can only be accomplished through the channel of a profoundly quickened and deepened earnestness in the work of missions itself.

I. As to the intellectual and critical movement of the age, the attitude of the missionary spirit may be, on the one hand, absolutely fearless and friendly, while on the other hand it holds this intellectual movement in clear subordination to its own still larger spiritual end. For the intellect is a part, but only a part, of the spirit. In the great Oriental mission fields scientific agnosticism is powerfully affecting the native thought, while here at home the new Biblical criticism has brought upon all classes of religious societies perhaps their sharpest strain of difference and debate; and how to adjust the operations of a missionary society to this critical tendency is plainly a task of great delicacy and difficulty.

But the voice of our argument at this point is perfectly clear, and in it there is both a liberal and a conservative note. On the one hand, and so far as the movement of the time is truly intellectual, the missionary sympathizes with it. He should meet the intellectual unbeliever with a finer intellec-

tualism even than his own, and if he is dead earnest, and *live earnest* too, to gain the *whole* soul to Christ, he *will* incorporate in his work this finer intellectualism.

Let us never forget that Christianity is intellectual. Never a school without a chapel, but never a chapel without a school. Christianity is, let us repeat, a *life*, and a part of that life is thought, and there cannot be any real thought unless it is free thought. We sometimes say "*free* intelligence." Intelligence is not intelligence unless it is free. In our time a religion must take thought on board or fail. Christianity is the only religion that dares to take thought in its integrity on board. Protestantism is the free and spiritual union of unfettered intelligence and fervent faith, without detriment to either. It is not the invention of the sixteenth century. It was born in the first birth of the rational soul, and it shone in the finished intuition of Jesus and in his boldly doing away with the letter of the ancient code while he fulfilled its spirit.

The Protestant missionary, then, in meeting the free thought of the age, simply meets outside of himself that which is an integral factor within himself. He is to be at home beneath the illumined dome of the twentieth century, because he is himself a part of that illumination.

So much, then, is admitted and gladly urged, that our missions have no quarrel with the spirit of rational criticism if only it be genuinely rational, that is, unprejudiced and devoted to truth. But, on the other hand, the missionary spirit insists that all speculation, with which in itself it has no quarrel, shall yet be subordinate to the practical errand of saving men.

The missionary has little leisure to examine the mere nebulae in the theological skies. He leaves that to his brother at home in the seminary. Somebody should count threads, but not the man who is running with the life-line. The missionary is the ordinary minister, minus a little speculation and plus a little urgency. He has his freedom of thought certainly, but he is engaged in the imminent wrestle

to rescue a man or a nation from moral death, and he wishes to think to some practical purpose. The possibilities of the unrevealed future, for example, engross his attention as little as does the weather of tomorrow the attention of a fireman who dashes into a burning house to save a child. The text would teach us, I feel sure, that the main missionary motive is not drawn from any speculation whatever as to the future. That motive is drawn from Christ and from the preciousness of man and the possibility of saving him *now* by bringing the image of Christ's manhood into him. Here is the glowing heart of the Pauline idea — to save a man *now*, from his sins, in Christ ; to rescue a nation *now*, from its degradation, in Christ. This is the commanding and flaming conception. The eschatological forecast, prominent as it should be, is not the *most* prominent factor in the consciousness of the missionary.

The missionary spirit insists on the perspective of immediate service, and in the instant blaze of this great foreground certain horizon questions lose relative importance. And *for the very same reason* the missionary spirit condemns, not severely, some hesitancy of attitude upon these horizon questions. It is gently tolerant of marginal misgivings so long as they do not intrude upon this peremptory perspective of immediate service, but not tolerant of them when they do thus intrude.

For we are like men "lying awake in the dark" and listening, to use Bishop Leighton's beautiful image, in regard to many of these questions of the future life. Our minds fail us. We cannot straighten out everything. You remember William Whewell's quaint line

"There is no force, however great,
Can stretch a cord, however fine,
Into a horizontal line
That shall be accurately straight."

And surely, dear brethren, in view of our urgent text, may we not say this : It is not so much whether a man's con-

jecture inclines *this* way or *that* way upon some secondary point concerning which little is said in the Scripture, as whether the man holds *either opinion*, whether pro or con, as of little moment compared with the tremendous mid-rush of Christian motive to win men now and conquer the nations for Christ before the firing of the sunset gun, which shall determine the fitness of a man to be Christ's missionary.

II. As to the movement of what we call the industrial enterprise of our time by the aid of applied science. The missionary sustains a similar attitude of glad welcome and acceptance of these novel and brilliant energies as allies to the spread of the gospel, but only so far as they are kept subordinate to the end of the spiritual rescue of men.

As to physical science itself, if genuine, it must be an ally not an enemy to a religion whose gracious hammock is swung between the two towers of the incarnation and the resurrection. At these two critical points of doctrine, where honor to physical nature blends with faith in God, the coming age is to reveal, I believe, a profound community of ground between our scientific friends and ourselves; and then, too, the instruments which science has given to enterprise—the engine, the press, the telephone, in whose mysterious echoes speech repeats itself a thousand miles away—all these spreading in the wake of commerce over the world not only break up the stubborn masses of heathen custom but add agencies of incalculable power to the service of the gospel itself.

Business sagacity also, executive skill, inventive genius, the alert, combining, creative mind, are both welcomed and developed in the missionary arena, but all "that we may gain" men. Missionary enthusiasm may "adapt" itself to a business age, and, brethren, suffer me to say that the best adaptation to a business age is a *great advance in giving*. We hear of "retrenchment." The very stones of the missions cry against this enforced retrenchment.

Read the "*Cry from the Missions*," the most terribly eloquent document ever laid before our anniversaries. Let

us heed that cry. "Reducing contributions" is drawing missionary blood.

In reference to one great field of missionary effort, hitherto the most impenetrable, perhaps, and obdurate of all—the field of the Moslem—might we not hazard the conjecture that perhaps the application of science to enterprise—or, in a word, *machinery*—is destined to be the most effective possible ally to the Christian faith, for machinery is the embodied victory of mind over matter, or, to put it in another way, of will over fate, and Mohammedanism is fatalism. Machinery is the natural antithesis of Mohammedanism.

Mr. Edward Sell, writing in the last August *Contemporary* of the "New Islam," approves the effort of certain younger Moslem scholars to bring Islam into accord with the progressive tendencies of the times. The attempt will be futile. When some years ago in Cairo I visited the great Mosque of El-Lazar, where thousands of Arab students are taught the Koran, and saw these boys and youth seated in little groups on the broad floor of the Mosque, each one swinging his body backward and forward as he again and again rehearsed the passage in a vacant and mindless recitative, I said : This is not a religion ; it is a mental despotism, almost a monomania. It is the paralysis of a fatalistic creed, as if physically forced upon the very fiber and function of the brain. "Fixed, from the very outset," says Dr. Kuenen, "this is the character of Islam."

Now, machinery in an instant shatters this rigid code, for progress begins with a blow struck back at fate, and machinery is the triumph of such a blow.

But a higher and still more apposite instance is at hand of this legitimate adaptation of modern missions to the scientific environment, where the adaptation is plainly the *product* (as it is my main purpose tonight to argue)—the product of the great Christian thought of rescue. We find this instance under the flag of our own Board in the figure of the missionary *physician*—for the crown and bloom of modern applied science is in the field of medicine; and one

of the peculiar glories of modern Protestant missions, and of this American Board, is the educated missionary physician.

Never the church without the school, we have said. Never either without the hospital. "The church and the hospital must come together to the Orient," said Dr. Post to me in the operating room of the great and noble hospital at Beirut.

I love to think of the missionary physician, and for what he stands today—one of the most magnificent products of these centuries. On the scientific side he in his profession of medicine occupies that wonderful focal point whither all the bright paths of modern physics and scientific discovery converge—the Square of Saint Mark's in the Venice of Science—and he stands there *in Christ's name*. Reading the human frame beneath this searching and splendid illumination, knowing its laws and its perils, and treating its diseases as a way of Christian approach to the man himself, he embodies the very genius of the scientific age in its noblest field of practical operation, while yet he is not in the least thereby chilled in his errand of winning men to Christ; on the contrary, it is the spirit of the cross which has produced him and placed him where he is. Becoming man's physician, he ceases not to be Christ's missionary. Along a channel cleared, not clogged, by scientific enthusiasm, pours the old Christian passion to "save," and he stands forth by the side of his preaching brother, sharing with him in the one royal and overmastering ardor to "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

III. Only a word can be said upon the third great new force of our time, though it deserves many.

"We are living in the sociological age of the world," writes Dr. Josiah Strong in his recent and most stirring book, *The New Era*. Indeed, the question now is not one even of democracy but of a *new* democracy. To the democracy of individualism, with which we are familiar, has succeeded a subtle and powerful rival—the democracy of

socialism—and around this distinction rages a cyclone of discussion and dissension.

The agitation of these theories is beginning to affect some of our most important missionary fields, while here at home, in this drift towards social coöperation and representative control, we come upon what is a living question for us in this Board—the question between a corporate nucleus and an outlying popular constituency.

But on this field, also, the missionary spirit stands with a discriminating sympathy, and here, as everywhere, the guide to the true adjustment is to be found in the same freshened sense of the breadth and depth and holy splendor of our missionary errand, while on the field the true missionary finds in the instant wrestle to save men in Christ the source of the true social enthusiasm. The true missionary will never repeat that error of "too much politics" which characterized the Latin missions of the sixteenth century in India and Japan. He does not meddle with the civic relations of governments to their subjects, and yet, as representing the fellowship of Christ, he is in sympathy with the people and with popular liberty. He does not approve that "dropping down deadness" of manner which, you remember, Sidney Smith said some bishops liked in their clergy, and which despots desire in their subjects. On the other hand, however, he stands for order and for law, for good manners and social refinement, and for the finished results of accumulated resources and a stable civilization. His sense of human brotherhood in Christ attracts him to what is true in the new democratic and social ideals, while at the same time his sense of the separate beauty and value of each individual soul guards him against their false and fantastic extremes.

Thus the missionary becomes a social mediator between extremes of opinion, and from his lonely and critical and often perilous field of toil, in his balance of judgment and breadth of sympathy, he voices this final maxim of the nobler democracy, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." May it not even be true that

just as in applied science and in machinery we find the natural ally of the cross against the crescent, so in the modern spirit of popular liberty and social coöperation we are to find the natural ally of the cross against caste, which is the practical fastness of the ancient superstitions of India. The local franchise and experiments in social coöperation are true correlatives of that blessed gospel before which, thus supported and recommended, the subtle sorcery of caste must dissolve and disappear.

IV. Last of all, we meet one of the most remarkable movements of our age in the call for a larger and wider philanthropy. Stirring among the noble-hearted sons and daughters of our times, of every class and special creed, in England, Sweden, Germany, America, we observe the spirit of a new philanthropy, whose specific note is the scientific analysis of social conditions as the prerequisite to a wise effort to relieve them. Within a dozen years a new literature, almost, has arisen in order to expound this new movement of humanitarian reform, to state its problems, record its experiments, and tabulate its results.

But surely no argument is needed to show that as a Christian missionary realizes the breadth and beauty of his own errand and enters into the spirit of the cross, in that proportion he comes into touch with this philanthropic movement, also, in its very finest form ; for the spirit of Christ is not that of a blind self-sacrifice, but is that of intelligent as well as sacrificial service to the whole man, body and soul.

The true genesis of philanthropy in its connection with religious faith is well given in the words of Florence Nightingale : "If I could give you any information of my life," she says, "it would be to show how a woman of very ordinary ability has been led by God, in strange and unaccustomed paths, *to do, in his service, what he has done in her.*" These words of the heroine of the Crimea sound like an echo of Saint Paul, where he says, "To reveal his Son in me that I might preach him among the Gentiles."

The word philanthropy, then, is only a Greek name for

one side of missionary effort. It is only a milestone on the road out to where Saint Paul, that strange and fiery scholar, stands, burning with a passion of rescue, listening at night across the Ægean to the cry for help from Macedon, and exclaiming, as the keynote of all his many-toned ministry, "That I might gain," "That I might by all means save."

The new philanthropy is only a part of that splendid and supreme conception of saving a man to Christ and in Christ, which, whether on the old Asian shore or in the heat and rush of today, is the divine glory of life.

Riding at nightfall, some years ago, through the long, dim archway that leads into the ruins of the great temple at Baalbec, an old Scotchman of our party missed his way and struck heavily against a projecting beam or fragment of rock. He was thrown from his horse, and lay stunned and bleeding. No adequate medical aid was at hand. We did for him what we could, and after he had recovered consciousness we bound up in a rude way his wounds, which were serious, and next morning we placed the pale and suffering old man in a palanquin and set out to carry him over the mountains to Beirut. It was a weary march. As we crossed the plain and came under the foot-hills of the Lebanon Mountains I saw a horseman far above us, riding straight toward us down the steep mountain side. I thought at first he must be a man of the desert, so daringly and magnificently he rode, his horse leaping down from point to point and falling upon our little caravan almost like a bolt out of the heavens. But he raised his cap and spoke in English. "I hear you have had an accident," said he, "for bad news travels fast across the plain. I am Dale, of Zahleh"—a name now starred in the glorious annals of American missionaries and of the Syrian mission—"and I rode down the mountain to tell you to bring the injured gentleman *straight up to my house* in the mission at Zahleh on the hill. We will take care of him, and have a doctor out from Beirut to attend him, and when he is able set him on his way."

I looked at the speaker and thought I was in sight of

something higher and whiter than the snow summits of Lebanon. Gerald Dale, of Zahleh ! I see him now as I saw him then, his cap off, his hair tossed back, his eye flashing with the daring of his precipitous ride, his splendid horse all in a foam—the light of the morning flaming across the fine, chiseled face, the very incarnation of Christian chivalry and philanthropy—Christ's true knight, promptly and wisely offering the best he had to a suffering stranger in manhood's and Christ's name.

Brethren, I have spoken too long, and yet not long enough unless I have been able to throw into relief this simple idea that a Christian mission today may and should adapt itself to the freshest and strongest forces of the times we live in, but that the *missionary spirit itself*, a certain living and loving earnestness to gain men in Christ, is the *true source* of breadth and felicity of method in accomplishing this adaptation.

We are in the whirl of a tremendous epoch. If missionary enterprise is to adapt itself to this epoch it must be not by devices and compromises and subtleties of policy, but by the deep reënforcement of the old Pauline ardor to save men in Christ. Only the eternal love of the cross can *produce* the true genius of adaptation in winning men—the quick apprehension, the fine responsiveness, the spontaneous grace of address, and in policy the large yet safe measures of true progress.

As to these four great features in the life of our time—the spirit of intellectual freedom and rational criticism, the spirit of science and its application to industrial enterprise, the spirit of a representative and social democracy, the spirit of humanitarian reform—I must believe that our Christian missions may meet them and, in a sense, may incorporate them all.

But, O brethren, what a *fervent heat at the center* is requisite to balance the dispersive tendencies of such broad adaptations and maintain the one end of saving men in Christ regnant to the outermost tip and filament of all

this immense array of novel and brilliant relations and agencies.

Only a *passion* to save can make the end to master the method in such a time as this, but such a passion is attainable, and the way to attain it is surely evermore the same old way—draw closer to God and closer to man, or, in one word, draw closer to Christ, who is both God and man.

The attitude of the missionary or the missionary supporter resembles that of the orchestral performer, who in one quick, infallible second glances from the midst of the intricate score to the beat of the baton of his leader; so, in the midst of the bewildering score of the modern age, the true man of missions fixes his eye upon Christ and upon Christ's errand to save, and in the thrilling supremacy of that one idea he finds the key to a practical answer in all questions of detail.

I confess, honored brethren, that I have thus construed your demand upon me at the present moment, that, in view of all the critical considerations of the hour, the fittest service I might render would not be to attempt to pursue any side-track of special discussion, still less to seek any novelties of address, but simply to invoke afresh the old splendor of the missionary enthusiasm; for it surely is the true solvent of all difficulties, the true guide to wise and happy adjustments. To realize it anew, in all its ancient fervor, will surely, more than anything else, exalt this anniversary, give harmony to its counsels and practical force to its decisions, making it a blessing to our churches throughout the land and to our mission stations throughout the world.

I invoke, then, in Christ's name, on this occasion, in closing, the *missionary spirit*. Springing from the depths of the great incarnation it enters, as Christ himself enters, into the souls of his disciples, becoming there a passion for rescue in his name. Unlike the proselytizing zeal of other religions, it seeks not to capture the man but to renew him. It sees man in Christ and Christ in man, whom it at once honors and pities and yearns over with that strange *donum*

lachrymarum — that “gift of tears” — of which the old Fathers speak. As in a kind of glowing and unworldly vision, it realizes at once the love of God, the worth of man, the woe of sin, the nameless power and pathos of the cross, and it rushes forth with a lover’s heart and a hero’s will to bring the cross to the sin — the Saviour to the man.

In this rush to save all lesser things take lower places. Difficulties are as nothing. Oceans, deserts, are crossed ; jungles are pierced ; obscure dialects are mastered. Dangers do not daunt, nor long delays exhaust, nor even failures chill this missionary ardor. It sings in the music of the immortal lands. It can receive a blow with a smile, and it gazes with a strange eagerness into every human face in order to detect there, beneath whatever degradation, the latent glory of the soul, and establish there the new similitude of the Lord. It is at once devoted and daring. Its spokesman is Paul, who is the father of the chivalric in Christian missions, to whom nothing is quite Christian unless it stirs the blood, whose words leap and tingle.

“I go bound in spirit,” he cries ; “I am debtor to Greek and barbarian ;” “I am an ambassador in bonds ;” “I am in travail until Christ be formed in you ;” and, with a still more unmeasured intensity, “I could wish myself accursed from Christ for my brethren.”

We rejoice in Keswick conventions and summer Bible readings, and, on the other hand, we rejoice in the critical discussions of true scholars concerning the Scriptures. The cult of holiness and the search after truth are noble things, and the light on the brow of both saint and scholar is lovely to see ; but must not all issue in this one tremendous note of practical wrestle to save ?

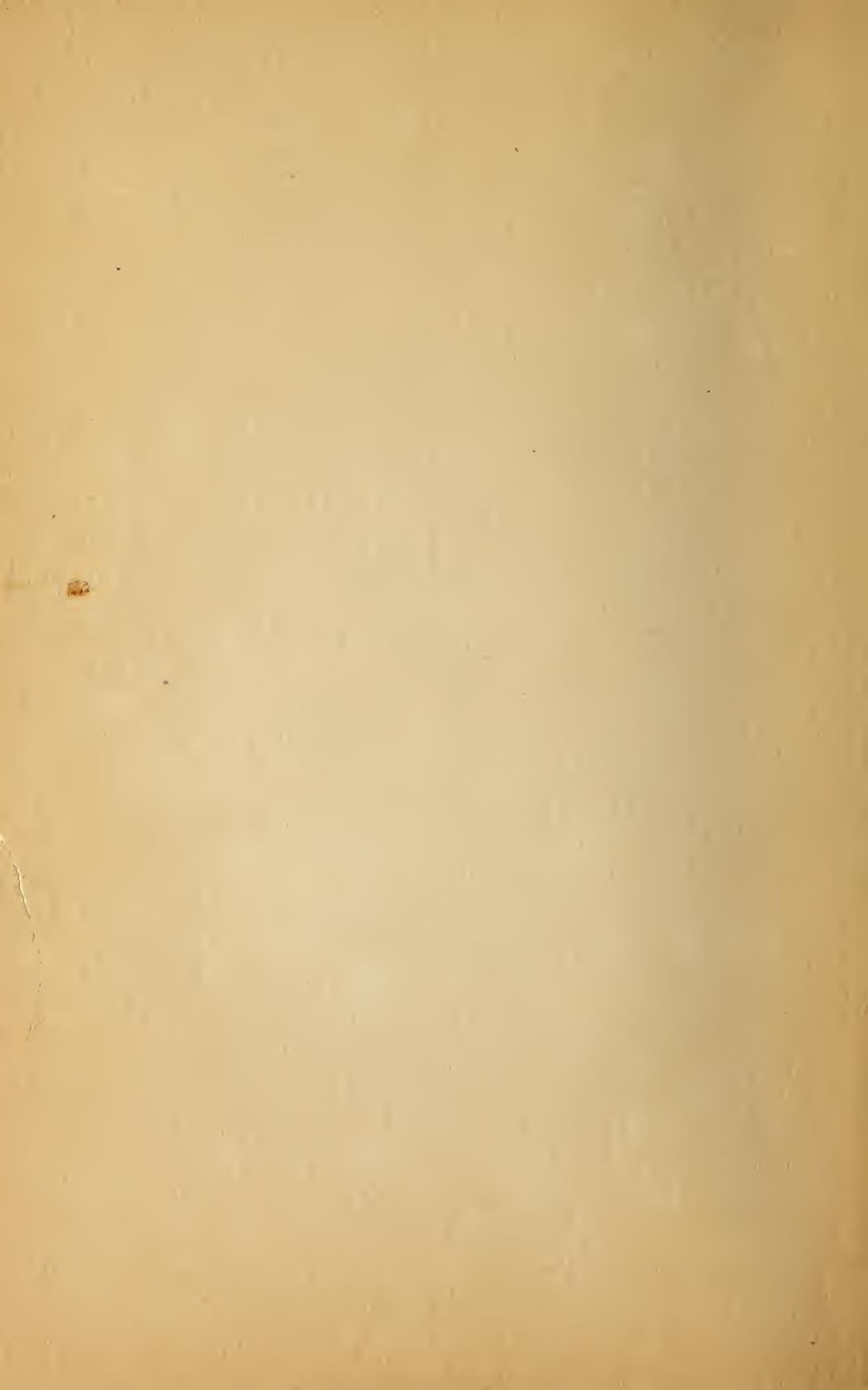
Down there on the wet sand with the life-boat is the place for a Christian, and nothing so touches the very missionary marrow as that low cry through the lips of the veteran Paul, “I could wish that I myself were *anathema* from Christ for my brethren.”

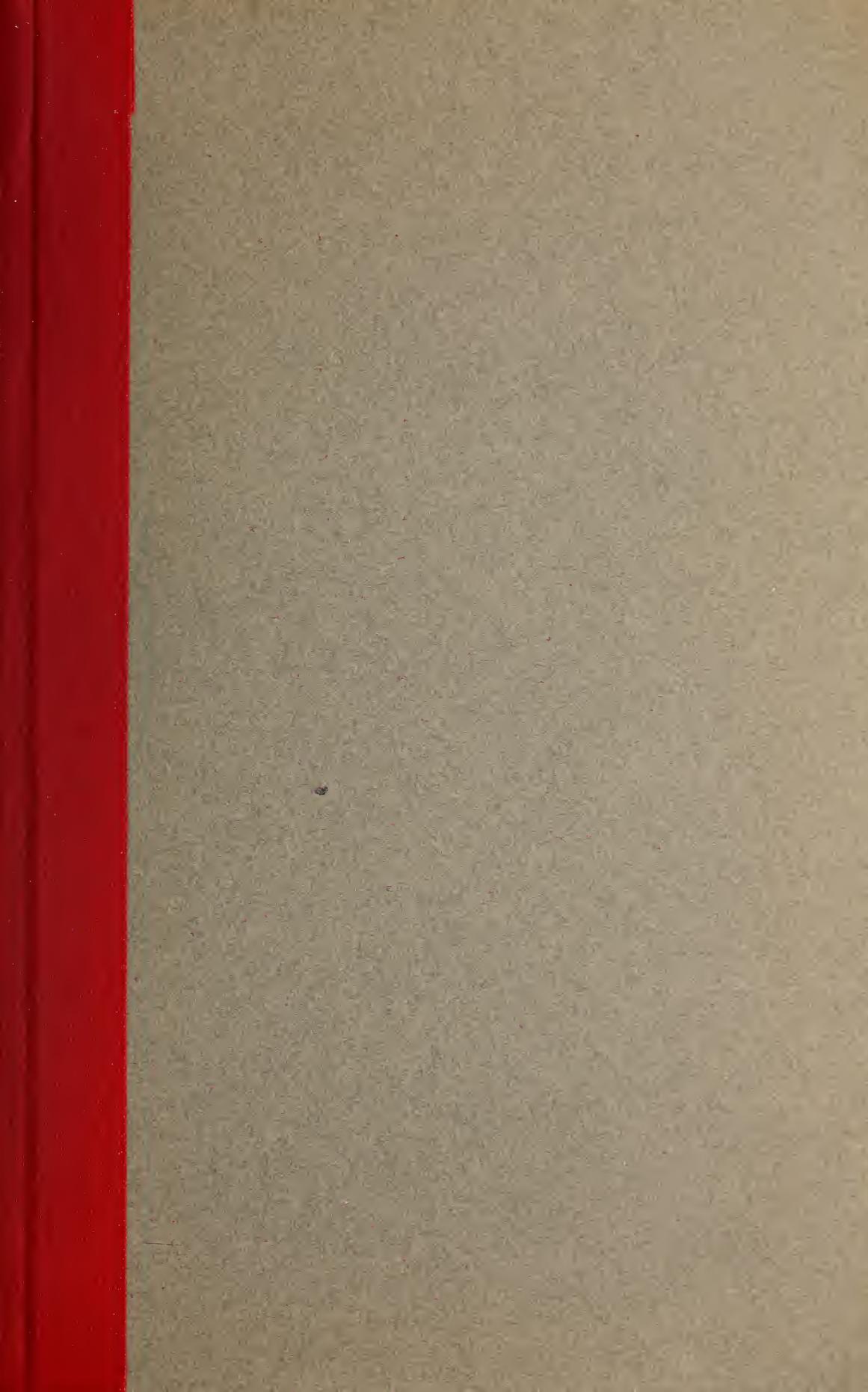
Let this, then, be the constant refrain of our anniversary,

"That I might gain," "That I might gain," "That I might by all means save." Our debates about method will then be like the earnest conference of a rescue party hurrying to the relief of imperiled men, for otherwise we lose the perspective of all discussion, unless we repeat at every interval Paul's great cry.

If, then, we are conservative, let us be so "that we may gain;" if liberal, let us be so "that we may gain." In the thought of the *man* yonder, and the *CHRIST* yonder, we grasp hands, and we shall go back to our churches with a spirit that shall make that ideal million a year for foreign missions a solid actuality even in hard times, and that vision of a score of new men from our seminaries for the foreign field an immediate and blessed fact.

We shall relight every torch. We shall find the true *method* in realizing the true *end* of missionary enterprise, and, best of all, this beloved Missionary Board not only will continue to be, but will become even afresh the channel of a divine energy, the humble bearer into all the earth of a holy power—a power real as Orion, intimate as motherhood, overmastering as the sea—the power of Christ to save.





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